



Dressage4Kids™ Celebrates 25 Years of Building the Future of Dressage

Dressage4Kids™, founded in 1999 by Olympian Lendon Gray, is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. What began as a vision to provide better educational and competitive opportunities for youth riders has evolved into a multifaceted organization that offers a wide range of opportunities for both youth and adults.

On Tuesday, February 27th, 150 people from the dressage community, including riders, trainers, coaches, judges, volunteers, owners, breeders, and enthusiasts, gathered at the Wellington National Golf Club in Wellington, Florida to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Dressage4Kids™.



photo credit: Dressage4Kids



photo credit: Allyssia Timberlake

Lendon Gray's original inspiration for Dressage4Kids™ stemmed from her experiences at the 1988 Olympics, where she noted the lack of structured programs for developing dressage riders in America. In one of her journal entries from those Olympics, Lendon remarked: "From watching the training of so many athletes and talking to them about their long-term training, I'm amazed that no one has set up some sort of program to develop young riders of Dressage in America – where riders would not just ride and compete, but [take part in] programs set up to develop general fitness, suppleness, strength, and mental preparation off the horse; lunging of the rider; books [and reading theory]; lectures; and video to truly understand what they're doing. It seems like such a waste to let our Dressage riders develop in such a haphazard manner. To do this even on a small scale would be so great – there is so much that could be done to bring up educated athletes as riders. It seems that we [as a country] could be so much better and the time to do it is as teenagers before riders get in a situation such as I'm in where one struggles full-time for survival."

With that vision in mind, Dressage4Kids™ started with one program, Lendon's Youth Dressage Festival (then called the Northeast Junior/Young Riders Dressage Championships), which tested a rider's knowledge in three areas (dressage, equitation, and a written test based on pre-assigned reading).

That one program has now developed and expanded across eight programs, touching the lives of thousands of participants, including not just youth but also adults.



photo credit: Shannon Brinkman



As a leader in the sport of dressage, Dressage4Kids™ is building the pipeline for the future. Over the past 25 years:

- over 110 horses have been donated through the D4K Horse Donation Program
- over 200 athletes have graduated from the D4K Winter Intensive and Summer Intensive Training Programs
- over 500 trainers have participated in the D4K Training4Teaching Program
- over 2500 riders have participated in D4K TEAM Program clinics
- over 3000 youth and adults have expanded their education through the D4K Unmounted Programs
- over 5000 competitors have competed in the Youth Dressage Festivals (Georgia, Michigan and New York)
- over \$500,000 has been awarded through D4K Scholarship Programs

One of Dressage4Kids™ key achievements is its commitment to making these programs accessible. Whenever possible, programs are offered for free or at reduced costs, ensuring that high-quality opportunities are available to all.

In the words of a D4K participant: “Joining Dressage4Kids has been a life-changing experience for me. It has taught me so much about the sport, introduced me to amazing people, and provided me with incredible opportunities. I am forever grateful for the impact Dressage4Kids has had on my life.”

Looking ahead, Dressage4Kids™ remains dedicated to developing programs that educate and contribute to the development of the riders, teachers, trainers, judges, and mentors of the future.

If you would like to make a donation to D4K, visit <https://dressage4kids.org/donate/> or contact Mary Livernois at d4k.org@gmail.com.





About Dressage4Kids

Dressage4Kids, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization incorporated for the express purpose of providing educational and competitive opportunities for youth riders and the adults who support them.

<https://dressage4kids.org>

Check out our videos on YouTube

Dressage4Kids | d4k.org@gmail.com | dressage4kids.org

See what's happening on our social sites:



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